

Transportation Bill Benefits Montana



Finally! At long last, on August 10, President George W. Bush signed into law a six-year transportation program reauthorization bill: the Safe, Accountable, Flexible,

Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (somewhat regrettably referred to as SAFETEA-LU).

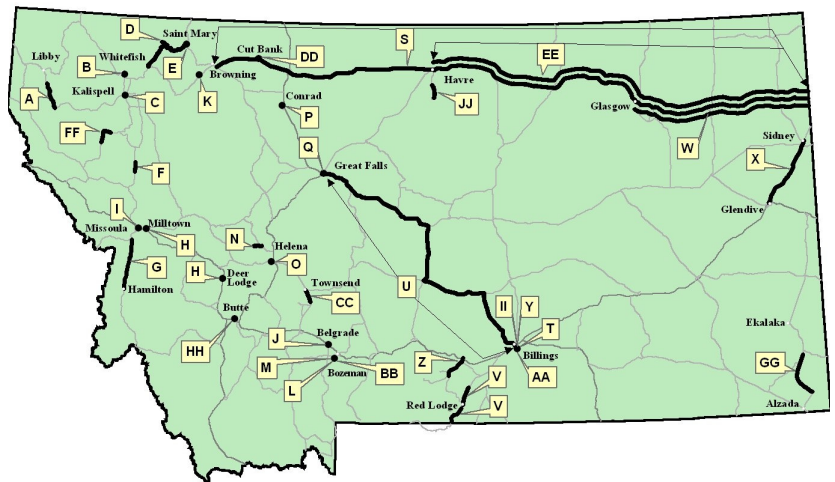
"We're really excited to see this bill pass, and the President sign it, and we can go on and build roads in Montana and bring some economic energy to the state," said MDT Director Jim Lynch.

For those keeping track, the signing of this bill put an end to the previous reauthorization bill (TEA-21) some 680 days and 12 program extensions after the long-term funding bill expired in September of 2003. The numerous short-term program extensions and general future funding uncertainty have led to increasing difficulty in developing and managing a deliverable highway program. The recent passage of SAFETEA-LU was a crucial step for those managing Montana's transportation program.

In addition to providing long-term funding certainty for program managers, SAFETEA-LU, much to the credit of Senator Max Baucus, treats Montana very favorably in terms of funding. In general, SAFETEA-LU provides a 30 percent increase in Montana's core highway program funding (the core programs include the Interstate, National Highway System, Bridge, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Programs and a new Highway Safety Program) and a 44 percent increase in overall state transportation funding. The increase in non-core programs is mainly through High Priority funding (for earmark projects) that Montana's congressional delegation secured for much-needed improvements around the state. In total, Montana will receive an estimated \$2.3 billion over the life of the six-year authorization, of which \$1.7 billion is directed to the state's core highway programs.

Nearly as important as the overall funding level are new provisions that will protect Montana's share of the national program while also helping us stretch our fuel tax dollars. Through the Equity Bonus Provision of SAFETEA-LU, Montana's formula share is "locked in" over the

continued on page 2



Project Locations With Special Funding

| | | |
|----|---|-----------------|
| A | Lincoln County – US-2 Swamp Creek East Roadway & Bridge | \$6 million |
| B | Whitefish Pedestrian & Bicycle Trails | \$3 million |
| C | Kalispell Bypass Projects..... | \$30 million |
| D | Going to the Sun Road Reconstruction..... | \$50 million |
| E | St. Mary Water Project Road & Bridge | \$8 million |
| F | US-93 Ninepipe to Ronan Projects | \$8 million |
| G | US-93 Projects Between Lolo & Hamilton | \$15 million |
| H | Milltown Dam Site Redevelopment – Missoula & Deer Lodge | \$5 million |
| I | Missoula – Russell Street Reconstruction & Bridge..... | \$6 million |
| J | East Belgrade Interchange & Connecting Roads | \$8 million |
| K | Two Medicine Bridge, US-2, East of Glacier National Park..... | \$25 million |
| L | Bozeman Parking Garage | \$4 million |
| M | Bozeman Library Plaza & Bicycle/Pedestrian Trails | \$1.125 million |
| N | Marysville Road Reconstruction, Lewis & Clark County..... | \$5 million |
| O | Helena I-15 Corridor | \$10 million |
| P | Conrad I-15 North Interchange | \$4 million |
| Q | Great Falls South Arterial Development | \$4.5 million |
| S | US-2 Corridor – Browning & North Dakota State Line..... | \$20 million |
| T | Billings Bypass | \$7 million |
| U | MT-3 between Billings & Great Falls | \$15 million |
| V | Beartooth Highway & Red Lodge North | \$22 million |
| W | US-2 Corridor – Glasgow East to North Dakota State Line | \$10 million |
| X | MT-16 – Northeast of Glendive | \$7 million |
| Y | Shiloh Road, Billings | \$10 million |
| Z | MT-78 Corridor Development..... | \$10 million |
| AA | Bench Boulevard & Lake Elmo Drive, Billings | \$17 million |
| BB | 19th Street – Babcock to Kagy, Bozeman..... | \$5 million |
| CC | US-287, Townsend South..... | \$10 million |
| DD | Cut Bank Railroad Overpass | \$6 million |
| EE | Havre East – including Poplar to Glasgow | \$10 million |
| FF | Lonepine North & East (MT-28) | \$7 million |
| GG | S-323 – Alzada to Ekalaka | \$12 million |
| HH | Port of Montana Access Road – Butte | \$4 million |

life of the bill—meaning that our percentage share will not degrade over time, as was the case with the last bill. This allows MDT to more accurately plan for future project development and construction projects throughout the life of the program.

A second significant change is a provision that allows Montana to decrease the required match for additional programs through use of a sliding scale match. Historically, the sliding scale was only applied to matching funds for non-Interstate roadway programs such as National Highway System and Surface Transportation Programs. The rest of the programs were subject to the standard 80/20 federal/non-federal match. The broader application of the sliding scale decreases the non-federal match for the Bridge, High Priority Projects, and Improvement Project Programs, which will allow MDT to stretch Montana's fuel tax funds further and thus delay the need for a state fuel tax increase. Montana's congressional delegation deserves much of the credit for this change in match requirements. Montana is one of only five states to receive the broader application of the

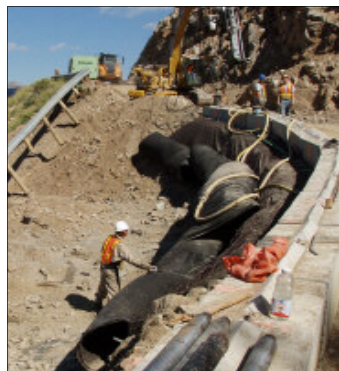
sliding scale for the High Priority Projects Program.

Consistent with the highway program gains, the transit provisions in the new bill are also favorable for Montana. Under SAFETEA-LU, Montana will receive an estimated 215 percent increase in transit program funding. This new funding is the result of a greater emphasis on providing public transportation access to the disabled, tribal members, and health and human services agencies. The expanded application of sliding scale matches, similar to those in the Highway Program, will further benefit Montana's transit programs.

Overall, SAFETEA-LU will bring more funds, more projects, more safety improvements, more public transportation services, and an estimated 18,000 jobs to Montana. In the coming weeks and months, MDT staff will be contacting agencies and officials to discuss the changes.

If you have any questions in the meantime, please contact Jim Skinner, Program and Policy Analysis Manager, at 444-9233 or jkskinner@mt.gov.

Beartooth Highway Repairs Near Completion



Work is progressing on the Beartooth Highway (U.S. Highway 212) between Red Lodge and Cooke City, and MDT District Administrator Bruce Barrett is cautiously optimistic the work will be completed by the October 15 target date. The biggest potential obstacle at this point is the weather. At its highest point, the Beartooth Highway reaches 10,974 feet, and snow is not

unusual at higher elevations this time of year.

Repair and reconstruction work is nearing completion at all 13 sites damaged by spring mudslides. Current efforts are concentrating on Sites 7 and 11 where workers are constructing an MSE (Mechanically Stabilized Earth) wall and box culvert. Incidental work such as paving, seeding, composting, recontouring, and rockfall- and debris-fence installation continues on various sites.

This is one of the largest emergency relief projects MDT has ever undertaken, and work to reopen the road is progressing at a record pace. The unique partnership between MDT, Kiewit Western, HKM Engineering, and JTL Group has contributed greatly to this progress.

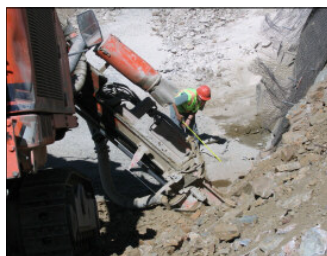
The area remains unstable and dangerous, and construction equipment poses an additional danger to anyone in the area. MDT urges people not to travel beyond road closure points.

Those interested in the construction can view 9 of the 13 sites from an observation area developed by MDT in cooperation with the Custer National Forest. To find the area, take U.S. Highway 212 to the Rock Creek turnoff, approximately 12 miles south of Red Lodge, and follow the pavement through the Parkside, Greenough Lake, and Limber Pine Campgrounds. Then turn left on Forest Road No. 2421, also known as the Glacier

Lake Road, toward the M-K Campground. Look for the observation area about 1 mile south of this campground. Binoculars are recommended but not essential.

Motorists can still travel between Red Lodge and Cooke City via the Chief Joseph Scenic Highway (S-296). For more information and detailed directions, go to www.redlodge.com/bthighway.

For additional construction information, contact Charity Watt Levis at 444-7205 or cwattlevis@mt.gov.



Watco Acquires Second Montana Short-Line Railroad

On August 15, the Yellowstone Valley Railroad became Montana's fifth short-line railroad when it began operating on 171 miles of track in northeast Montana.

Yellowstone Valley Railroad (YSVR) operates on two separate lines through 15-year lease agreements with BNSF Railway. The northern line begins at Bainville and ends at Scobey. The southern line begins in Glendive and extends northeast to Snowden. Together, the two lines are expected to serve about a dozen customers and move over 8,000 carloads of primarily sugar and grain annually.

YSVR is a wholly owned subsidiary of Watco Companies, which is based in Kansas. Watco currently operates 15 other short-line railroads in 15 states including Mission Mountain Railroad, which began serving Kalispell and Eureka in December of 2004.

Yellowstone Valley Railroad's office is in Sidney. For more information, contact general manager Mike Lyons at 433-8561 or mylyons@watcocompanies.com.



CTEP Spotlight

A New Look for Victor's Main Street

The small Bitterroot Valley community of Victor has a new look thanks to an energetic and creative citizens' committee. Both sides of Main Street between Meridian and Tudor Streets now sport new, wider sidewalks, drought-resistant trees surrounded by iron guards, low-maintenance pedestrian benches, period street lights, and new trash receptacles.

Most of the funds for the project came from the Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP). To raise the 13.42 percent in local matching funds, Ann Hayman, Anita Drewien, and Linda Gonsalves formed the Victor Improvement Project Committee in 1999. The committee organized bake sales, silent auctions, bread and breakfast tours, brew tastings, a letter-writing campaign, and even hosted a Christmas shop to raise the entire local match of approximately \$18,000.

Landworks Consulting and Design in Missoula designed the project, and Gregston Construction from Hamilton was the prime contractor.

For more information about CTEP, contact Mike Wherley at mwherley@mt.gov or 444-4221 or Ross Tervo at rtervo@mt.gov or 444-9209.



Victor's Main Street in August 2003



The same street corner in June 2004

Capital Assistance & TransADE Application Workshops

MDT will soon begin accepting applications for funding assistance through its Capital Assistance Program and the Transportation Assistance for the Disabled and Elderly (TransADE) Program.

The federally funded Capital Assistance Program provides funding for vehicles, shelters, and other capital equipment, while TransADE provides operating assistance to agencies that provide transportation to the disabled and elderly.

As in past years, MDT will host several regional informational workshops to provide prospective applicants with information about these transit funding opportunities. We encourage all agencies interested in these programs to send a representative to one of the workshops listed below.

If your agency serves residents living on or near one of Montana's seven Indian reservations, recent changes in federal law provide opportunities to use Indian Reservation Road Program funds for the required matching funds for MDT's Capital Assistance Program. For more information on these changes, agencies should contact their tribal government or Bureau of Indian Affairs office.

Locations, dates, and time for the workshops are as follows:

Polson:

Tuesday, October 25
Lake County Public Health Dept. Conference Room
802 Main Street
TransADE Workshop 10 a.m. to 12 noon
Capital Assistance Workshop 1 to 3 p.m.

Billings:

Wednesday, October 26
MET Transit
1705 Monad Street
TransADE Workshop 10 a.m. to 12 noon
Capital Assistance Workshop 1 to 3 p.m.

Shelby:

Friday, October 28
Marias Medical Center
640 Park Drive
TransADE Workshop 10 a.m. to 12 noon
Capital Assistance Workshop 1 to 3 p.m.

Butte:

Monday, October 31
Belmont Senior Citizens Center
615 East Mercury Street
TransADE Workshop 10 a.m. to 12 noon
Capital Assistance Workshop 1 to 3 p.m.

Wolf Point:

Wednesday, November 2
MDT Wolf Point Field Office Conference Room
Highway 25 East
TransADE Workshop 10 a.m. to 12 noon
Capital Assistance Workshop 1 to 3 p.m.

Havre:

Thursday, November 3
MDT Havre Field Office Conference Room
1671 Highway 2 West
TransADE Workshop 10 a.m. to 12 noon
Capital Assistance Workshop 1 to 3 p.m.

If you have any questions or need assistance in attending the workshop, please contact Patrick Sanders at 444-6120 or psanders@mt.gov.



Not Just for Kids!

Wednesday, October 5, is International Walk (and Bike) to School Day, part of a week-long effort that began in Great Britain in 1994.

Parents, teachers, and community leaders are encouraged to join schoolchildren as they walk or bicycle to school on October 5.

The purpose of Walk to School Day is to teach children how to safely travel to and from school, create parental awareness of hazardous route conditions, enhance the health of children, improve air quality, and decrease vehicle congestion in school zones.

During last year's event, approximately 3 million participants from 36 countries walked to school. For more information, visit www.iwalktoschool.org, or contact Pam Langved-Davis at 444-9273 or plangvedavis@mt.gov.



Back to School

As students return to the classroom across Montana, keep the following in mind when you drive near schools:

- Watch for children walking or bicycling when backing out of driveways and garages and when exiting alleyways.
- Watch for children in neighborhood school zones. Be aware of your child's school route.
- Slow down and watch for children at corners and bus stops.
- Be aware of school bus laws: *Yellow flashing lights* indicate children are preparing to load or unload and drivers should be prepared to stop. *Red flashing lights* indicate children are loading or unloading and drivers **MUST** stop and wait until red lights are no longer flashing. The motorist must not resume driving until the extended stop-sign arm is retracted and the bus is moving again.
- Children are not small adults. A child's peripheral vision is not fully developed. Children also have difficulty determining direction of sound and judging the speed and distance of moving motor vehicles.

Before & After

A Safer Route Through Seeley Lake



Before: This was Montana Highway 83 through Seeley Lake in August 1999. It was the scene of an unacceptable number of rear-end and left-turn collisions.



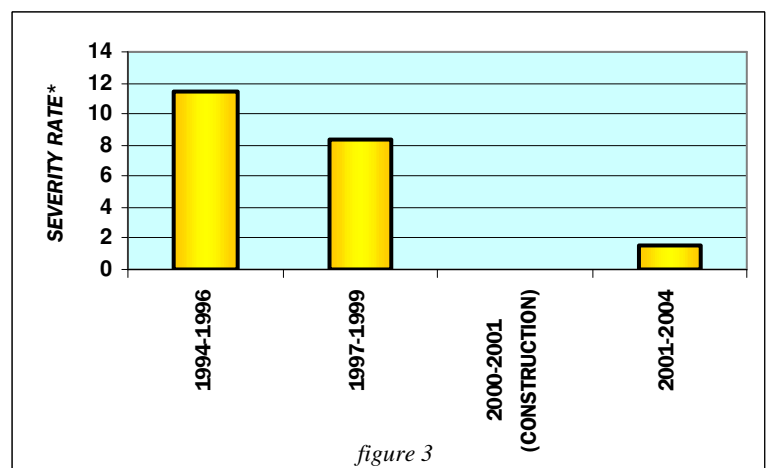
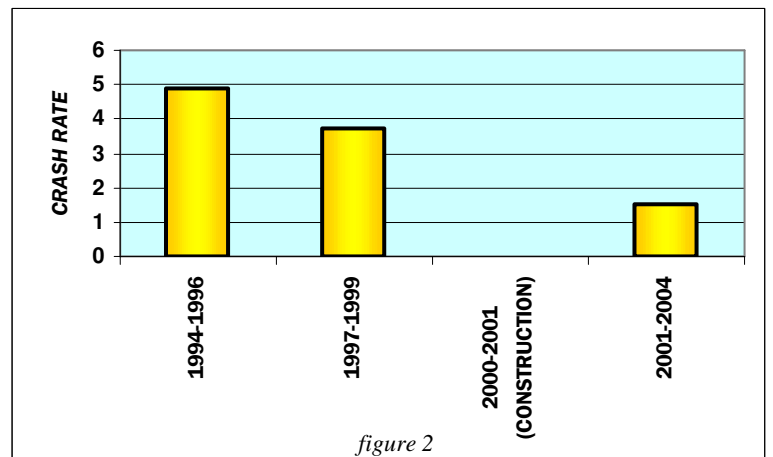
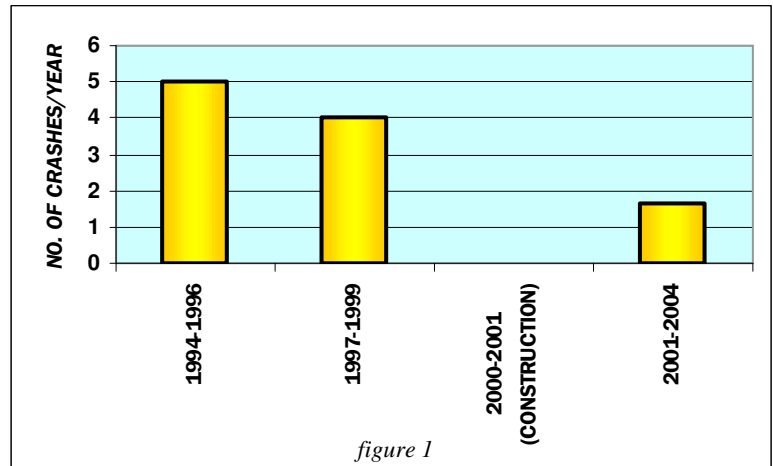
After: A new two-way left-turn lane and bicycle/pedestrian path make the trip through Seeley Lake much safer.

Montana Highway 83 is a scenic two-lane highway that runs through the unincorporated town of Seeley Lake. It is a tourist route where the average daily traffic count soars during the summer. In July 2004, the average daily traffic count was 3,885 vehicles. This was 73 percent higher than the average daily traffic count for the rest of the year.

Because of a high number of rear-end and left-turn collisions on this highway, MDT added a two-way left-turn lane and a separate bicycle/pedestrian path in 2000–2001. A-1 Paving was the prime contractor for this project.

Following these improvements, the crash rate dropped from 4.91 crashes per million vehicle miles traveled in 1994–1996 (3.71 in 1997–1999) to 1.5 in 2001–2004 (figures 1 and 2). The severity rate* also dropped from 11.44 per million vehicle miles traveled in 1994–1996 (8.35 in 1997–1999) to 1.5 in the post-construction years 2002–2004 (figure 3).

As these statistics show, the relatively low cost of this project (\$1,100,000) produced big safety benefits for Seeley Lake.



*The severity rate is defined as eight times the number of fatal and incapacitating injury crashes plus three times the number of minor injury crashes plus the number of property-damage-only crashes per million vehicle miles of travel.

Montana's Historic Bridges 1915–1930

Part 1

In October 2005, the Montana Historical Society Press will publish *Conveniences Sorely Needed: Montana's Historic Highway Bridges, 1860-1956* by MDT historian Jon Axline. The following is the first installment of a three-part overview of Montana's historic bridges.

On July 18, 1915, the State Highway Commission's new Bridge Department supervised its first contract letting for a 240-foot steel-truss bridge over the Bitterroot River near Florence in Ravalli County. Initially, the Commission was responsible only for the design, contract oversight, and final inspection of bridges built on the Federal-Aid Highway System. The counties were responsible for funding the structures and maintaining them after completion. A committee composed of county surveyors and commissioners developed this system in 1913, and the legislature made it law in May 1915. Two months later, the highway commissioners hired a bridge engineer named Charles Kyle to develop standardized designs for steel truss, steel stringer, and timber bridges. In all, the Commission and the counties awarded contracts for 33 bridges in 1915. Of those, only five still exist: a bridge in Valley County over Beaver Creek, three bridges across the Musselshell River in Golden Valley and Musselshell Counties, and Browne's Bridge south of Melrose.

Browne's Bridge originated as a toll bridge across the Big Hole River on the old road between Bannack and Deer Lodge. Built by Fred Burr and James Minesinger in 1863, the first territorial legislature licensed the bridge in 1864. The men sold the structure to Joseph Browne in 1865. Browne's Bridge looked like most of the toll bridges in the territory at the time: rock-filled log piers supported two log



The original Browne's Bridge circa 1880s. King Post trusses can be recognized by the simple triangular configuration of the trusses. The log crib piers were typical of bridges built in the 1860s and 1870s. (Montana Historical Society)



The existing Browne's Bridge was built during the winter of 1915-1916. It is a riveted Warren through truss bridge. Warren trusses were first developed in the late 1840s in Great Britain. The design was exported to the United States in the early 1850s, where it was first adapted for use by American railroads. Warren trusses are distinguished by the "W" configuration of the trusses.

spans, one of which consisted of simple King Post trusses. Browne and his family lived on a ranch a short distance west of the bridge. Evidence suggests that Browne ran his ranch while his family collected tolls from travelers who used the bridge. Browne's Bridge operated as a toll bridge until 1909, when Beaverhead and Madison Counties took over joint ownership of it.

By the second decade of the twentieth century, the old bridge had definitely seen better days. Fire damaged the structure in 1914 and weakened the center span, which already had a tendency to sway whenever any weight was placed on it. Although the counties had condemned the structure by 1915, residents continued to use it despite its infirmities. A photograph of the bridge taken in early 1915 shows a Model T crossing a span that is dangerously tilting downwards toward the river. In 1915, the counties petitioned the State Highway Commission for a new bridge. Charles Kyle adapted his standardized design for the site, and Missoula contractor O. E. Peppard built it during the autumn and winter of that year for \$8,600. Within weeks of completion of the new bridge, high water washed out the old bridge, which had become to many local residents a "melancholy reminder of the passing of the old west, and its pioneer men and their works." The "new" Browne's Bridge, a riveted Warren through truss, still crosses the Big Hole River about six miles south of Melrose at a Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks' fishing access site.

From 1915 to 1926, the process of bridge construction in Montana changed very little. The Highway Commission and the counties oversaw the construction of over 160

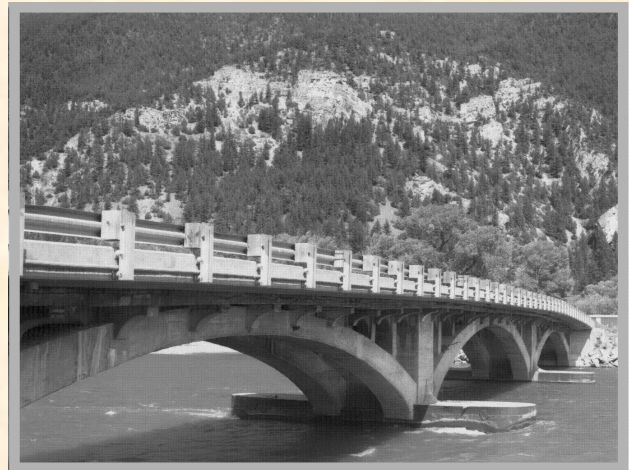
bridges. Some that can still be visited include the recently rehabilitated Natural Pier Bridge at Alberton, the Clark Fork Bridge at Bonner, the Yellowstone River Bridge at Pompey's Pillar, and the Missouri River Bridge at Toston, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places earlier this year. All of these bridges were designed by the Highway Commission's Bridge Department and built with county funds. In 1926, however, the system radically changed with the passage of a Federal-Aid Road Act. Under the new federal legislation, the state became responsible for the design AND construction of bridges on primary routes. The federal government, through the Bureau of Public Roads, allocated money to the states who had to match a portion of it. In Montana, the gasoline tax provided the matching funds with the counties providing only a small contribution toward the projects. The Commission built some truly spectacular bridges during the decade, including the Scenic Bridge in Mineral County, the Bell Street Bridge in Glendive, and the Carter Bridge in Park County.

The Carter Bridge was the last of the large reinforced concrete arch bridges built by the Highway Commission. In 1920, Commission bridge engineers developed a bridge design to accommodate modern traffic and provide an aesthetically pleasing approach to Yellowstone National Park through the Paradise Valley south of Livingston. Carter Bridge is located at the site of one of the earliest river crossings in Park County. The county replaced the first bridge, a log toll bridge built by Tom Carter in the early 1880s, with a combination timber and steel span in 1898. High winds destroyed the bridge in 1908, and the county replaced it with a new timber and steel span built by the Montana Bridge and Iron Company of Livingston. High water damaged that bridge in 1918. The site's bad luck with timber and steel bridges compelled Park County and the Highway Commission to look at alternatives for a new bridge at that site. In January 1919, the Bridge Department adapted the design of the Tenth Street Bridge in Great Falls for use at the Carter crossing. Eight months later, the county and state highway commission awarded the project for the new bridge to the Ben Crenshaw Company of Livingston.

Problems plagued the project from almost the start. Shortly after Crenshaw began work on the bridge, it became obvious to the Commission's engineers that the company was not quite up to the task of building the complicated structure. Design changes, inexperienced workers, and the lack of clear direction from the Highway Commission caused Crenshaw to suspend work on the bridge for several weeks until the problems could be resolved.

The Highway Commission's chief engineer John Edy was concerned about Crenshaw's shoddy work on the guardrails. He complained that the bridge's appearance was "very good at a slight distance but rough when viewed from a short distance." He blamed the poor visual appearance on Crenshaw's inability to construct the proper concrete forms, which allowed the concrete to ooze out between the cracks. Edy also claimed that Crenshaw's work

on the guardrails appeared sufficiently "unworkmanlike as to inevitably draw public attention to its defects." In his haste to complete the project, Crenshaw had ignored many of the Commission's design specifications. In retaliation, the Commission declined to accept the bridge, and Crenshaw refused to make the necessary changes. Eventually, Crenshaw's bond holder, the First State Bank, hired workers to complete the work on the Carter Bridge. In 1954, the Montana Highway Department replaced the



The Carter Bridge, which crosses the Yellowstone River south of Livingston, was designed to provide an attractive approach to Yellowstone National Park.

original concrete guardrails on the bridge and widened it to better accommodate traffic demands. Eight years later, U.S. Highway 89 was rerouted through the Paradise Valley, bypassing the old bridge. The Carter Bridge now carries traffic over the Yellowstone River on Montana Secondary 540.

Through the 1920s, the Highway Commission built bridges of all types and lengths. The increasing popularity and dependence on the automobile generated an active road- and bridge-building program in the 1920s. The bridges, however, were more functional than the roads – Montana had the reputation of having the worst roads in the 48 states. In 1930, author Hoffman Birney wrote "The roads of Montana are, I believe, the poorest of any state in the Union. Even the glorious scenery of the Rockies can't entirely make up for ruts, chug-holes, mud and detours – to say nothing of broken springs or stone-bruised tires The road was atrocious, the scenery superb."

Economic calamity in the 1930s would cause a profound change in Montana's system of roads and bridges. Within less than ten years of Birney's observation and after a massive government-funded public works program, Montana's roads evolved from the nation's worst to among the very best in the United States. Many of the bridges built during that decade still survive and are integral parts of the modern highway system in Montana.

MDT Wants Your Comments

To receive a list of highway projects MDT plans to present to the Transportation Commission, call us at 1-800-714-7296.

Mail your comments on proposed projects to MDT at the following address or e-mail them to mdtnewprojects@mt.gov.

MDT Project Analysis Chief
PO Box 201001
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Contact Information

Only the most frequently requested numbers are listed here. For an area or person not listed, call 800-714-7296 (in Montana only) or 406-444-3423. The TTY number is 406-444-7696 or 800-335-7592.

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MDT's mission is to serve the public by providing a transportation system and services that emphasize quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality and sensitivity to the environment.

Rail, Transit & Planning Division Montana Department of Transportation

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